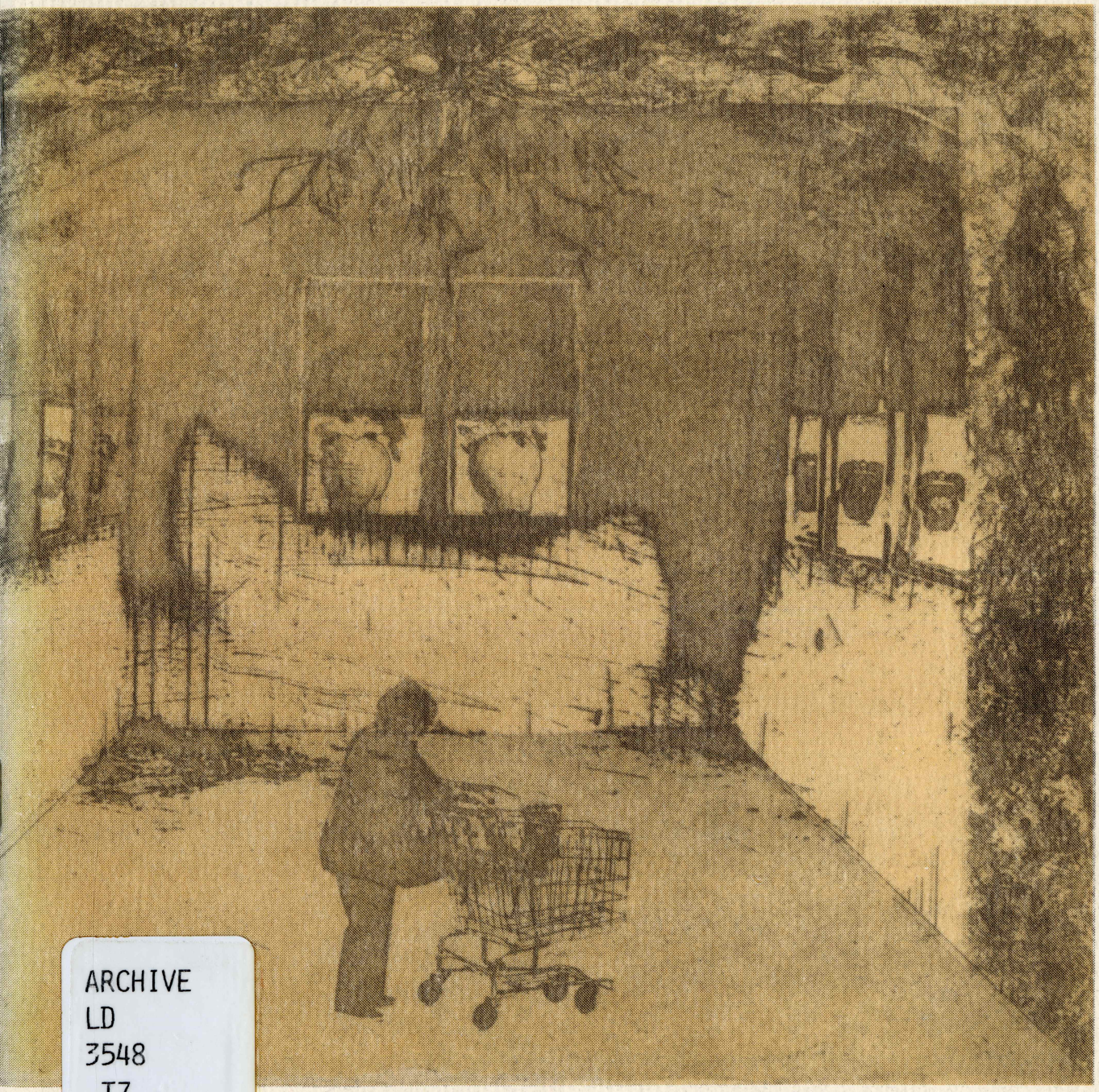
TOWER

spring 1990



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TOWER

Literature and Arts Magazine of the University of Montevallo

Spring 1990

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"Without Contraries is no progression."

William Blake

Jo E. Alexander
Graduate

Scott Martin
Junior

Scream

The epitome of perfection is
Her role as the ideal childbearer,
And mate.

Yet the shadows depict
A woman set free from
The bondage of human imprisonment,
Who gleefully butchers
Her husband.
(An abomination of true disliking)
One by one she strangles
Her children.
(The tormentors of her sanity)

But in the world of reality
And light, she greets each day
With a smile,
Professing love to her family,
With the truth
Screaming out of
Her eyes.

Ben Rigsby
Senior

Michelle Harper
Junior

Hate

Anger in me
Rots my soul like maggots:
I've seen what they've done,
O, the predators of gentleness
Have jumped your warm naivete
And beat you to the ground;
Certainly to maim, but not to kill.
So again, in the darkness
Of your bruised kindness will they
Cripple you again.
I would kill
And devour
Each and every one
If God grant me the chance.
But to His will
I want to see them suffer
Tenfold
The heartfelt death I see in your eyes.
O joy to the day
When the shadows will turn
And the light will burn
The disgust from my heart
And the breath from my heart
And the breath from their soul.

Michelle Warlick
Senior

Craig Stroud
Senior

Silent Lightbulb

Mama's face is whipped with fear.
Her hands claw at her backside,
As she stares at the hem of her apron
with silent lightbulb eyes...
  The hand:
    that has changed the oil on the tractor
  The hand:
    that has lifted child after child into the
    scratchy pecan tree
  The hand:
    that wears the ring
  The hand:
     alone, ignores her wide empty eyes,
and strikes mama for all she is worth,
knocking her teeth out like spare change.

Mama's face is whipped with tractor grease,
baby powder, and patterned gold;
and still she looks at life
like a silent lightbulb—waiting for a change.

A Good Place In the Road

as we walked trippin' through your woods,
tryin' to find your mama's house,
i thought of the blackberry vines
along that old muddy selma road,
that pulled at my grandaddy's coat,
tried to pull him down in that ditch where
the police tore the life outta my brother,
scratched his skin like tar paper,
made him bleed black juice,
enough for a hundred jars and a hundred pies,
and no matter how he pulled, they would not
let him reach you house, baby sally,
he cried and pleaded for them, for you,
like a white woman, like my mangy old hound,
though they wouldn't even scratch him a good
place in the road, his own hole in god's ground

John John's First Boar Hunt **James Cormier**
Senior

Don't Eat the Doughnuts

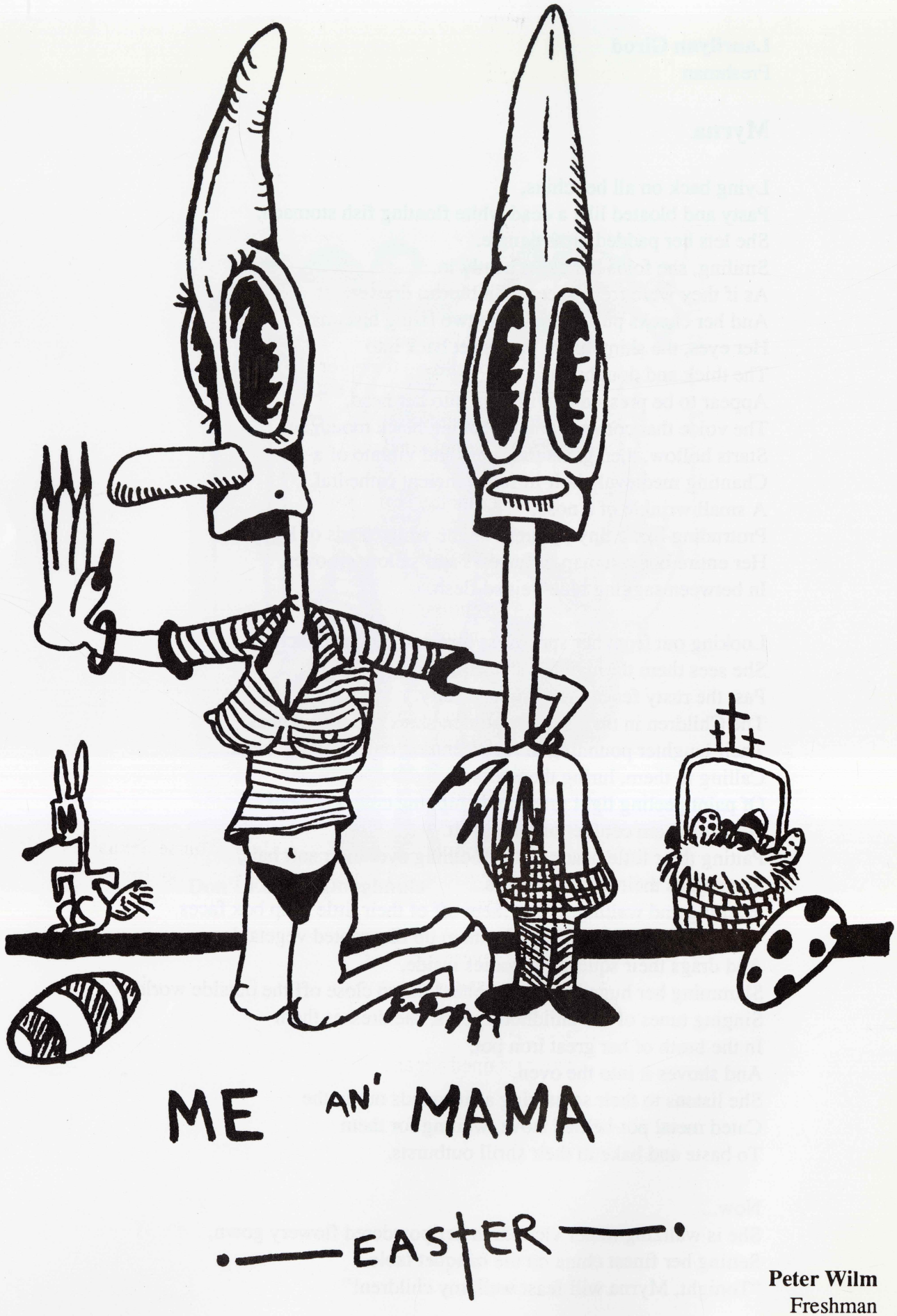
Laurilynn Girod
Freshman

Myrna

Lying back on all her chins,
Pasty and bloated like a dead white floating fish stomach,
She lets her padded arms dangle.
Smiling, she folds her chins neatly in,
As if they were fresh sheets in a bureau drawer,
And her cheeks puff to look like two rising biscuits.
Her eyes, the shiny black pupils set back into
The thick and doughy face,
Appear to be pressed unwillingly into her head.
The voice that comes from her caving black mouth
Starts hollow, then gains the depth and vibrato of a
Chanting medieval choir in some ancient cathedral.
A small wrinkle of a nose,
Protruding like a tiny pyramid on the white sands of Egypt.
Her entire body, a map of furrows and sallow grooves,
In between sagging blue-veined flesh.

Looking out from her springless torn and ragged couch,
She sees them through her shaded window,
Past the rusty fence they skip and folly.
The Children in their slender golden skins and dirty knees,
Their laughter pounding in reverberation on her empty head.
Calling to them, luring them to her mightly palace
Of paint peeling light green and chipping concrete steps,
Offering them confections and fruit.
Patting their little heads and smoothing over their soft hair,
She enjoys their blinded smiles...
Wanting and waiting to bite them off of their little soap box faces.
Without a warning, she plucks them up like rooted vegetables
And drags their squirming bodies inside,
Slamming her huge iron door behind her to close off the outside world.
Singing tunes of her childhood years, she dresses them
In the broth of her great iron pot,
And shoves it into the oven.
She listens to their screaming as it rounds out in the
Cated metal pot-bellied stove, waiting for them
To baste and bake in their shrill outbursts.

Now...
She is waltzing to her victrola in her powdered flowery gown,
Setting her finest china on the banquet table.
"Tonight, Myrna will feast well, my children!"



Peter Wilm
Freshman

Winter Daniels
Senior

Wimmink

Popeye and Brutus agreed once
Or twice
"I yam swearink off wimmink" said one
"You said it buddy" said the other
They lied
They beat the bejesus out of each other
Over a skinny, stupid, loud one

Popeye's higher thought processes
Concerned Nature
(i.e. Spinach-Green...)

Brutus was non-thinking
Controlled by Nature
(i.e. Lust-lower crotch function-Angst-dragging off Oyl)

Oyl was skinny, loud, stupid
Easily impressed by the sailor's gifts of flowers
(c.f. Nature)
But drawn to Brutus
Who would beat her
Who had obvious intentions of Nasty, Dirty, Course Sexual Assault
Eventually All were saved from themselves by God Spinach
...Nature-Popeye

Despite their severe beatings
Neither men sustained more than a neat, circular black eye
Olive cooed stupidly
"Oh Popeye"
And never retained a mark

Leda and John Swann

(With apologies to W.B. Yeats and
a double handful of Italian painters.)

John Swann hit hard playin ball. He was doin good in school and wore fine clothes. He worked afternoons and that was a time when nobody thought nothin bout the quarterback club givin you a little pin-money. He looked like a god strollin through the streets. Had a strange light about him. Wasn't like them kids today with them chains and them little beepers. Oh sure they was a fight every now and again, but nothin that had to do with machine guns like in the movies or somethin. They called him Zuess or somethin, cause he was so fast. People'd say "Hey Zuess! Gonna make us some touchdowns?" John Swann'd say "Just like I was lighten!"

That Leda was white trash pure and simple. She was skinny and pale and missin a couple of teeth. But she was white and liked black boys, and she like to get hit around some too. Jus trash.

That summer was fore John was goin over to play ball at Texas. They didn't have nothin gainst black folk playin ball. All them boys ever cared bout was if you run fast. John Swann was a smart boy. He'd a made it *his* opportunity.

He'd been workin over to that icehouse usta be over on 8th for three, four summers. And that summer he'd took to drinkin a little whiskey at a shothouse was over on 6th. Weren't no harm in it. That was where Leda usta go to get her man every once in awhile, and she saw John one night down there sittin on a milk crate drinkin.

John was middle chocolate colored and wore them two-tone patent-lether shoes with the white panels on the top and the shiney black on the sides. Had little gold bars on em. They was pretty shoes and he wore a Tyrolean walkin hat his Daddy had brung back from his time in Germany. It had a feather in it. He'd say "I'm Flyin John Swann. That is why I have this Swann feather in my Tyrolean Walkin Hat." He enjoyed saying Tyrolean Walkin Hat. He was somehtin.

The first thing Leda ever said to him when she got out of that old Ford that she'd get from her daddy was, "How'd you like to rub that feather on my privates pretty nigger boy?"

Well that started all them down there to hooting and a buncha things bout if John was a man or not. You know how men get when they drunk. John took up the spirit of the thing and when she come trying to slink her skinny-ass over in that hand-me-down black skirt—why you could see some of the purple places from the last time she had done her tricks—John said, "That ain't all I'll rub on your quim white girl. You sure you gonna handle what I got?"

That started up the hollerin and such again and Leda tryin to look sexy, but what she was was ugly even for a white girl, and well, John went got in the truck with her.

He wasn't to the house there for bout a week. When he did come, he was looking kinda poor. And people who saw Leda said that she was sportin some of the biggest bruises and swelled places they's ever seen on her. Somebody at the icehouse asked bout him fuckin a white girl. John Swann told em, "Shut up or I'll kill you." Everybody knew it was somethin strange goin on and he never did go to Texas. Jus kep workin in the icehouse.

After that first baby girl, someplace fore the second one—Ellen or Hellen was the first one I think—the one they found in the crack house couple months ago. Pretty girl. Crazy though. Think them gang boys had her all tied down spraddle-legged for a week. I think the paper said she was about half-dead and caked up with them gang boys' spunk when the police found her. She in that crazy-

hospital over there now. God what a sad damn thing. Did you know the other one, Clystrida or somethin, killed her man comin back from the Navy? Her and some other boy thought they'd get rich on his $20,000 military insurance. Jus crazy.

Anyway, Leda got scared of her own bidness after he broke her arm or somehtin. Old John was fierce jealous beside. In them days it was easy to get a black man strung up for messin with a white girl. She jus told some people some things, and well, one mornin they found John Swann hangin outside his house in a pear tree. Someone had cut off his johnson and put it in his mouth. Little paper sign on him said, "Don't mess no white girls."

The paper ran a picture and called it a tragedy. They was a picture of him after a game. Said it was one of the biggest judicial travesties in history or somethin. Leda was a whore lady for a couple years after. She lived in a trailor down that road goes to the dump. She had a bunch of them plastic birds, them pink flamingos, out in the front yard. 'Cept they was white and a lot more delicate lookin than the others of them birds I remember. I could be wrong. I was only down there a couple of times. She wanted too much money.

Phil Proctor
Senior

Joanne Fogle
Senior

Paul Wilm
Freshman

Death and Shadows

Death clips unsuspecting children
Who happen to giggle in their sleep.
It takes the candy from their dreams
And throws it harshly at their faces.
Death comes in the form of hairy shadows,
From a land where spiders shop at yard sales
And all gravediggers wear wigs.
Death is a large pair of hedgeclippers
That cackles and hisses like a raven,
And hides in the trees, waiting.

My dear,
There is no way to avoid something as good as Death
Just take heed...
Dance!
Write!
Sing!
Laugh!
Cry!
Do Everything...while bathing
In the presence of Death's hairy shadows.

excerpts from I Saw the Earth

"O, shiver...scattered pieces of aluminum.
O, swing open...refrigerator doors.
O, switch on, you television sets!"
I was made from man
But I was not man-made...
I was not hand-crafted from steel and fire,
Tossed and slung frm some hube factory...No.
My mother is just another Great Planet
She is a dry soil, a foaming mud,
And I, being squeezed from between
Her two perched legs...saw the Earth.
I saw close, the rich soil
I felt her enclose me,
Like skin.
I smelled the roots and gum of trees.
And underneath, in the dark:
Radishes, carrots, turnips, rootabagas!
It was I, and other Life.

Some time ago I was presented with four things:
A fork, a knife, a spoon and a plate. I knew not
What each was for, or how they were related.
So I placed them together on an altar I had made
And worshipped them. The plate was mighty and
Round...the Sun and Moon, all the same. The fork, knife
And spoon were three deities sharing divine auras.
The fork was blessed with Power. The knife...Strength.
The spoon...Wisdom.

(Somewhere in a great field stands a child writing
addition and subtractions signs on a blackboard.
She knows not what they mean, but for some reason finds
them attractive.)

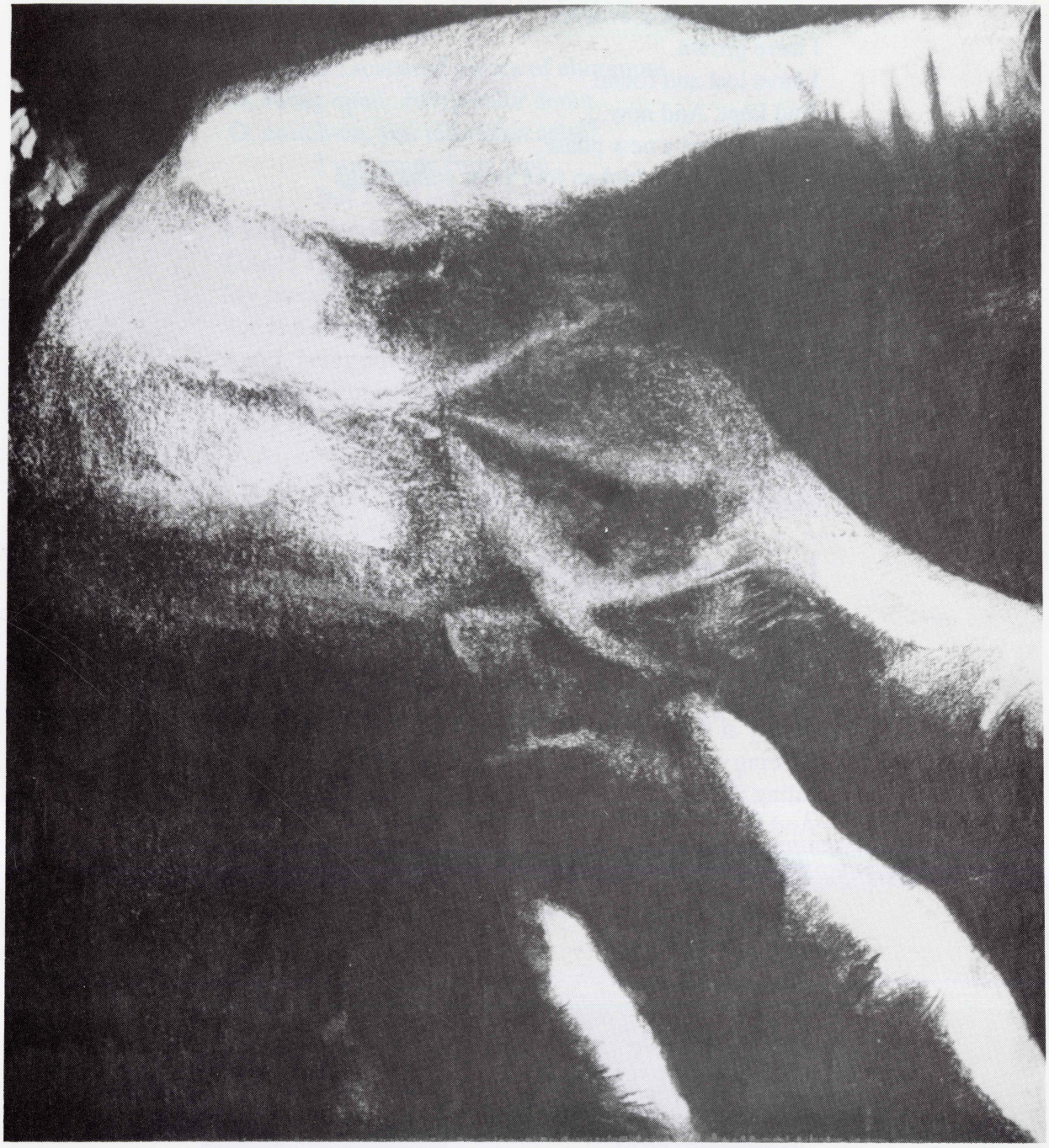
This is me being a quiet phesant.
This is me being human,
But looking out through other's eyes...
Eyes that escape humanity
Because I crave to be Animal
Even though I'm already Animal.

And with me being alive for a number of years
I have swept and evolved
I have grown
I have lost and found
And kept. And now...
I have begun a new phase,
A new page of chicken foot-print scratchings
I've slipped out of my clothes
To be naked, only for a short while,
And change into a strange new sort of costume.

I've plowed a new path,
Not yet finished, not yet knowing
Where it is going,
Where it wants to take me;
Slicing, ripping through green fleshy limbs
Shredding the thick arms of chlorophyll.

I am renaming myself as Science.

Planning.
Diagrams and charts...
Sitting late at night,
Happy at the worrying I suffer,
Tracing out my body-patterns, wants and desires;
Filing all the addictions, finding them storage
And hide-aways.



Triptych

Roy Burns
Freshman

Jerry Buckingham
Graduate

To Boys

To boys who know the earth in Spring,
Who, young today, have yet their dreams,
I give this song.

Two boys who leave
The 24-hour video games awhile
To spend their hands and thoughts
On a chestnut filly, young as they,
And leave a world of Reebok aspirations
To splash and spray in a country creek.

Two boys
Whose hearts are not a stony soil
Yet,
And in whose eyes dance summer smiles
And dare the very air
To be more alive
Than they.

Two boys
Who accepted me with equality,
Though I am "adult" in their boy sight,
And talked with me as if
Years were merely exotic days
Between us.

To boys
Who shared their friendship
And casual wisdom
With a wandering poet,
This poet,
Gives this song.

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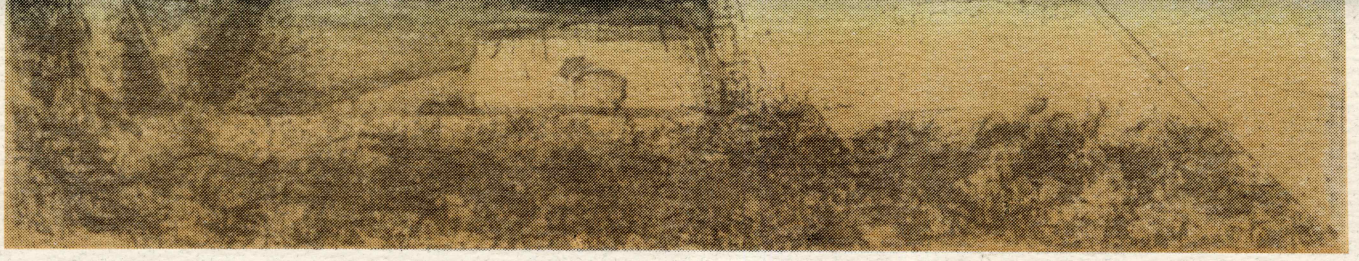

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